

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6323
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 1384

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, ASEC, PA, AR, UY
SUBJ: POSSIBLE THREAT TO AIFLD REPRESENTATIVE

REF: A) STATE 94144 B) ASUNCION 1535

1. EMBASSY OFFICER HAS QUESTIONED ETCHEVERRY AT SOME LENGTH REGARDING CONCERNS FOR PERSONAL SAFETY REPORTED BY BILL DOHERTY. GIST OF STORY IS AS FOLLOWS. ABOUT A YEAR AND A HALF AGO -- ETCHEVERRY IS UNSURE OF EXACT DATE BUT IT WAS WHILE HE WAS STILL LIVING IN MEXICO CITY AND TOWARD THE END OF HIS TENURE AS ORIT SECRETARY GENERAL -- HE RECEIVED A LETTER FROM AN OLD FRIEND LIVING IN PARAGUAY TO THE EFFECT THAT GOP AUTHORITIES HAD BEEN EXPRESSING AN UNACCUSTOMED INTEREST IN HIS ACTIVITIES. HE TENDED TO PASS THIS OFF WITH A SHRUG, EVEN WHEN THE SAME MESSAGE WAS REPEATED FROM ANOTHER SOURCE INSIDE PARAGUAY. LATTER OCCURRED SOME MONTHS LATER, DURING 1977, WHILE ETCHEVERRY WAS LIVING TEMPORARILY IN VENEZUELA.

2. HOWEVER, ISSUE HAS LATELY TAKEN A MORE DISQUIETING TURN. ETCHEVERRY WAS RECENTLY SOUGHT OUT BE A ONE-TIME LABOR MOVEMENT COLLEAGUE NOW LIVING IN BUENOS AIRES. LATTER IS NOW A
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SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN WHO IS VERY CLOSE TO ARGENTINE AND PARAGUAYAN MILITARY/POLICE CIRCLES, WHICH WHOM HE DOES BUSINESS (POSSIBLY INVOLVING CONTRABAND). HE HAD JUST RETURNED FROM ONE OF HIS FREQUENT VISITS TO ASUNCION WHERE SOME OF HIS SENIOR MILITARY AND POLICE CONTACTS UNEXPECTEDLY BEGAN ASKING AFTER ETCHEVERRY'S MOVEMENTS. SPECIFICALLY, THEY WANTED TO KNOW WHEN ETCHEVERRY MIGHT BE TRAVELLING CLOSE TO THE PARAGUAYAN

FRONTIER. SOURCE'S CONTACTS GAVE HIM TO UNDERSTAND THAT GOP IS WELL AWARE OF ETCHEVERRY'S AIFLD CONNECTIONS; IS CONVINCED THAT HE WAS BEHIND RECENT INTERNATIONAL EMBARRASSMENT OF GOP IN THE LABOR FIELD (TO WHICH DOHERTY VISIT CONTRIBUTED); AND HAS DETERMINED TO PUT HIM OUT OF CIRCULATION. SOURCE WAS TOLD DECISION WAS TRANSMITTED (AND PERHAPS TAKEN) BY STROESSNER'S PRINCIPAL PRESIDENTIAL AIDE.

3. ETCHEVERRY FREELY CONCEDES JUSTIFICATION OF GOP AND, SPECIFICALLY, STROESSNER IN CONSIDERING HIM AN ENEMY, BASED ON ACTIVITIES -- PARTICULARLY INVOLVING CPT-SPONSORED 1958 GENERAL STRIKE -- WHICH LED UP TO, AND CONTINUED AFTER, HIS EXILE. HOWEVER, FOR MANY YEARS, COINCIDING WITH HIS RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN AIFLD AND ORIT OFFICIAL, HE HAS LIMITED HIMSELF TO PURELY PASSIVE OPPOSITION TO STROESSNER. HE CONSIDERS IT IRRATIONAL FOR ANYONE TO VIEW HIM AS A DANGER TO THE PRESENT GOP. HOWEVER HE ALSO NOW CONSIDERS IT POSSIBLE -- IN VIEW OF THESE INCREASINGLY SPECIFIC WARNINGS -- THAT ELEMENTS OF THE GOP CONSIDER HIM SUFFICIENTLY DANGEROUS TO JUSTIFY TAKING SOME ACTION. HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THIS VIEW IS SHARED BY THE ARGENTINES OR URUGUAYANS OR THAT THEY WOULD ASSIST THE PARAGUAYAN SECURITY SERVICES IN ANY ACTION. BUT HE DOES NOT DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY OF INFORMAL COOPERATION BY BORDER-ZONE OFFICIALS. IN VIEW OF THIS HE INTENDS TO INCREASE HIS LEVEL OF PERSONAL VIGILANCE BOTH HERE AND IN BUENOS AIRES, BUT NOT TO DIMINISH HIS NORMAL LEVEL OF ACTIVITIES. HE WILL, CONFIDENTIAL

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HOWEVER, KEEP A PRUDENT DISTANCE FROM THE PARAGUAYAN FRONTIER WHEN IN ARGENTINA.

4. COMMENT: WE ARE IN NO POSITION TO EVALUATE THE DEGREE OF GOP ANIMUS TOWARD ETCHEVERRY. HOWEVER, WE HAVE FOUND HIM TO BE A SERIOUS, RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL, NOT GIVEN TO CALLING ATTENTION TO HIMSELF. IN ADDITION TO THE ALERT POSTURE ASSUMED BY EMBASSY ASUNCION (REF B) AND REPORTED INFORMALLY TO US BY EMBASSY BUENOS AIRES, REPRESENTATIONS TO THE GOP AT A LEVEL AND IN TERMS WHICH WOULD MAKE OUR INTEREST IN THE WELL-BEING OF ETCHEVERRY UNMISTAKABLY CLEAR TO ALL CONCERNED MIGHT BE ADVISABLE.
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